

YOUTH SEAT EVALUATION REPORT FOR JANUARY 23, 2015 ADVISORY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

In 2011 Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Director Dan Basta recommended that each sanctuary advisory council consider the addition of a youth seat on each council. The presence of a youth seat would provide opportunities to engage future generations of ocean stewards, users and leaders in sanctuary communities and to empower them to witness firsthand the challenges associated with the need for resource protection and ocean management. It was envisioned that the Youth Seat would be a non-governmental, non-voting member representing the youth ages 14-17. Based on this recommendation, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS) Advisory Council (AC or SAC), working with OCNMS staff, formed a Youth Seat Subcommittee in June 2013.

OCNMS staff were concerned about the success and sustainability of having a Youth Seat on the SAC because of the target age-group, including the logistics entailed for attending and participating in SAC meetings, need for adult chaperones, and ability to success recruit and retain a participant. OCNMS staff and AC members still wanted youth engagement on the SAC and decided to brainstorm potential avenues for youth participation. During initial Youth Seat Subcommittee discussions, several options to engage younger adults, including a Youth Seat, were considered as outlined below.

1. Youth Seat – The Youth Seat would be a high school student age 14-17 to act as a non-voting member of Advisory Committee for a one-year term, with the option for a second year appointment. He / she would attend bi-monthly meetings (six per year at various locations throughout Olympic Peninsula) to provide the council with a youth perspective on topics discussed in the AC.
2. Student Seat – The Student Seat would be available to any age student of an undergraduate or graduate program to act as a non-voting member of the Advisory Committee for a one-year term, with the option for a second year appointment. He / she would also attend bi-monthly meetings (six per year at various locations throughout Olympic Peninsula) to provide a student's perspective on key topics, without the limitations inherent in the Youth Seat.
3. Mentor Seat – The Mentor Seat would be a non-voting member of the Advisory Committee for a two-year term who would recruit student groups to attend and participate in Sanctuary Advisory Council meetings, as appropriate.
4. Student Participation Program – The Student Participation Program would allow opportunities for science classes and/or clubs (biology, marine, environmental, etc.) to observe and/or participate in Sanctuary Advisory Council meetings taking place in their communities.

In September 2013, the subcommittee recommended initiating the SAC Student Participation Program for a trial period of one year, reconvening in December 2014 to evaluate the program's effectiveness and make recommendations for the future. In creating a Student Participation Program instead of a Youth Seat, the intention was that more youth would be exposed to the SAC and the issues surrounding OCNMS in the region. In addition, it was hoped that the SAC

would gain youth perspectives from a wider range of youth across a broader demographic. The success of this program depended on SAC members and sanctuary staff being engaged in recruiting and interfacing with groups of youth across the variety of communities where Advisory Council meetings would be held. Below is a summary of youth participation during the trial period.

Summary of 2013-14 Student Participation Program:

SAC Meeting/Location	Teacher(s) Involved	Student(s) Involved
November 2013, Port Angeles	Dan Lieberman, Science/ Natural Resources teacher of North Olympic Skills Center in Port Angeles, co-presented on their Natural Resource Program	Karsten Turrey, student of North Olympic Skills Center in Port Angeles, co-presented on his projects with Natural Resource Program
January 2014, Forks	Dan Lieberman in attendance with his 2 of his students from Forks (4 were supposed to present but 2 unable to attend)	2 students from Forks High School/ North Olympic Skills Center (Miguel Rodriguez and Rosario Bello) presented on their research projects on river nutrient enhancement and river turbidity, respectively
March 2014, Lacey	Unable to secure participation of local class or teacher	Capital High School student Noah McCord of Olympia presented on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Youth Advisory Council process
May 2014, Neah Bay	Phil Renault, Neah Bay High School Science teacher, in attendance with his class of juniors/seniors	~14 Neah Bay High School science class students attended afternoon presentations to observe
July 2014, Port Angeles	N/A - summer break	
September 2014, Aberdeen	Jerry Walther, Taholah High School Science teacher, in attendance with 3 of his students	3 Taholah High School science class students from as observers of presentations.
November 2014, La Push	N/A - Stacy Fournier, Quileute Tribal School Grade 7-9 teacher, and several of her students were scheduled to attend the Intergovernmental Policy Council Habitat Framework presentation but were unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances	

During the trial period some challenges and limitations were identified, including:

- Significant staff and/or SAC member time invested in pursuing youth involvement
- Students need to miss school, needing advance permission
- Teachers need to miss school, needing a substitute teacher
- Involvement adds to teachers' already demanding workload, and does not necessarily fulfill existing state/national education requirements
- Lack of time to prepare students appropriately due to changing agenda items
- SAC received limited student perspective on SAC issues

- Teachers reported that students are more engaged while conducting field based educational activities and internships than they are while attending SAC meetings
- Student involvement did not necessarily meet intended goals to 1) gain perspective of younger adults on key topics and 2) encourage and foster future leaders in marine conservation

Recommendation

Based on the trial period results and feedback from teachers who did participate in the Student Participation Program this past year, the Youth Seat Subcommittee recommends placing more emphasis on field based educational experiences and less focus on implementing the SAC Student Participation Program. At this point, the Youth Seat Subcommittee does not recommend creating a Youth Seat on OCNMS Advisory Council. If opportunities arise that may benefit students and SAC, efforts will be made to involve youth at that time.